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Reconceptualizing Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism: Evidence from the Early Consecration of Anglo-American Pop-Rock in Italy

This article explores how foreign, recently imported cultural forms can redefine dynamics of legitimation in national cultural fields. Drawing on archival research, the article discusses the early consecration of Anglo-American pop-rock in 1970s Italy and analyzes the articles published by three specialist music magazines. Findings reveal the emergence of a shared pop-rock canon among Italian critics, but also that this “cosmopolitan capital” was mobilized to implement competing editorial projects. Italian critics promoted both different strategies of legitimation vis-à-vis contemporary popular music, and opposite views of cultural globalization as a social process. Theoretically, the article conceptualizes “aesthetic cosmopolitanism” as a symbolic resource which can be realized through competing institutional projects, rather than as a homogeneous cultural disposition.

Keywords: pop-rock music, critics, aesthetic cosmopolitanism, cosmopolitan capital, cultural globalization

The study of changing aesthetic hierarchies has been a longstanding concern in the sociology of culture. During the last twenty years, scholars have investigated the artistic legitimation of popular cultural forms like film (Baumann, 2007), television (Bielby, 2005), jazz (Lopes, 2002), and rock music (Regev, 1994). This literature has revealed the structural changes which enhance processes of re-classification (DiMaggio, 1987), like changing patterns of educational and social mobility (Baumann, 2007) and the emergence of art worlds devoted to the production of avant-garde forms of popular culture (Lopes, 2002). Further, several studies have highlighted the role of critics in intellectualizing popular culture. Both specialist publications (Lindberg et al., 2005) and national quality newspapers (van Venrooij & Schmutz, 2010) have progressively evaluated popular culture according to highbrow categories like originality, complexity and seriousness. Moreover, they have constructed new aesthetic canons through projects of “retrospective cultural consecration”, which selectively define the acts worthy of cultural memory (Allen & Lincoln, 2004; Schmutz, 2005).

This article further expands this literature looking at the relationships between cultural consecration and globalization. Focusing on the Italian context and the work of critics, I will explore how the early consecration of Anglo-American pop-rock in the 1970s redefined struggles for legitimacy in the national musical field. I will argue that knowledge of 1950s and 1960s pop-rock became a shared symbolic resource for newly launched specialist music magazines. However, this collective resource was mobilized to sustain competing editorial projects. Italian critics promoted both different views of cultural globalization as a social process, and different strategies of legitimation, i.e. different symbolic boundaries (Lamont & Molnàr, 2002) between valuable and unworthy forms of contemporary popular music.

Overall, the article contributes to the study of cultural consecration exploring the impact of global forces over local processes of legitimation, and showing how new, recently consecrated cultural traditions may be mobilized by different groups of cultural intermediaries. Put otherwise, the article addresses artistic legitimation as a “field of struggles” (Bourdieu, 1996) between organizations supporting competing ideological projects and endowed with different resources. As argued elsewhere (Varriale, 2014), research on cultural consecration has frequently addressed criticism as a homogeneous institution, underappreciating its diversity and dynamics of competition between different organizations. A “field perspective”, then, may help understand how these dynamics - diversification and competition - shape critics’ evaluative practices and orientation towards non-national cultural forms. As I discuss in the next section, it may also contribute to the growing scholarship on the transnational legitimation of Anglo-American popular culture.

Cultural Globalization and Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism

Research on cultural globalization has recently addressed the institutional dynamics of cross-cultural exchanges (Dowd & Janssen, 2011). Rather than focusing on questions of “cultural imperialism” or “hybridity” (Crane, 2002), a growing literature is looking at the role of organizations and gatekeepers in mediating globalization processes and their effects (Janssen et al., 2008; Berkers et al., 2011; Frassen and Kuipers, 2013). In this context, some scholars have focused on the growing transnational recognition of Anglo-American popular culture. On the one hand, cross-national research on cultural consumption reveals that pop music and television have become part of the upper-middle classes’ “cosmopolitan taste” in various European countries (Prieur and Savage, 2013). On the other hand, the same cultural forms have been appropriated by globally-oriented or cosmopolitan cultural producers in countries which do not enjoy the US’s central position (i.e. economic and symbolic power) in transnational cultural production. Focusing on the adoption of Anglo-American pop-rock in Western Europe, Asia and Latin America, Regev (2013) has defined “aesthetic cosmopolitanism” as a socio-structural process which reconfigures national cultural production. For Regev, pop-rock genres have become a new symbolic resource for younger music producers who combine pop-rock influences with their ethno-national cultural traditions, crafting new aesthetic idioms and forms of “cultural uniqueness”. Kuipers (2011, 2012) has documented a similar institutional transformation in the field of television, namely the emergence of a globally-oriented group of intermediaries (television buyers) in Poland, Italy, France and the Netherlands. Television buyers purchase international TV formats for their domestic markets, and their evaluative criteria are tailored to the aesthetic standards set by the television industry’s “centres” (particularly North-American quality television). These

studies show how the transnational legitimation of Anglo-American popular culture may redefine the structure of national cultural fields. It can create new divisions between nationally and globally-oriented cultural production (Regev, 2013), or can partly integrate national cultural sectors in a transnational field with autonomous aesthetic standards and organizational practices (Kuipers, 2011, 2012; Bielby, 2011). Furthermore, other studies reveal that depending on their economic and symbolic resources, national cultural organizations may respond to globalizing forces in different ways. For instance, in the French and Dutch literary fields some small publishers have invested in the translation of exotic or “world” literature to differentiate themselves from large-scale publishers, which have invested more on translations of Anglo-American literature (Sapiro, 2010; Frassen and Kuipers, 2013; Frassen 2015). This suggests that globally-oriented cultural producers may implement competing strategies, and that similar differences may be at work among cultural intermediaries. However, the aforementioned studies do not address questions of cultural legitimation, and the extent to which intermediaries - particularly critics - may promote competing “cosmopolitan” aesthetic canons (see also Cheyne and Binder, 2010). To be sure, Kuipers (2012) shows that while some television buyers purchase what they believe is good foreign television, others negotiate their taste with the demands of the companies they work for. However, it is not clear if these individual differences translate into dynamics of competition between different organizations, especially over what counts as good cosmopolitan taste and “good” cultural globalization.

This article shows that aesthetic cosmopolitanism¹ may work as a field of struggles (Bourdieu, 1996) between globally-oriented intermediaries pursuing different ideological projects and strategies of legitimation. In the following sections, I show

that the history of Anglo-American pop-rock became a shared “field-specific” capital for Italian critics. While cultural capital has been defined as knowledge recognized by different national institutions and social groups (Lamont & Lareau, 1988), field-specific capital indicates symbolic resources whose value is recognized only within a specific field of relations (Bourdieu, 1996: 101). For Italian critics, mastery of an emergent pop-rock canon secured membership into the local (but transnationally connected) field of pop-rock² and the growing sub-field of music criticism. It was a shared cosmopolitan capital (Weenink, 2008). However, competing institutional aims, like pursuit of economic modernization, or aesthetic and political critique, played an important role in shaping how critics mobilized this collective resource. Highlighting the theoretical distinction between aesthetic cosmopolitanism as a symbolic resource, and how this resource is “put into practice” (Bourdieu, 1990), I elucidate how institutional differences may shape its uses, and the conditions under which it is “converted” into economic capital or symbolic capital, i.e. status recognition among cultural producers and consumers (Bourdieu, 1996).

Data and Methods

The following discussion draws on archival research about the emergence of pop music criticism in Italy between 1969 and 1977. Drawing on Bourdieu’s field theory (1996), the research focuses on three publications (the weekly *Ciao 2001*, and the monthlies *Muzak* and *Gong*) with different institutional orientations and resources, which hence occupied different “positions” (Bourdieu, 1996) in the field of music criticism. These differences, as I discuss below, broadly mirror Bourdieu’s distinction between organizations with high market recognition (heteronomous or large scale cultural producers) and organizations with low market recognition but high cultural

and symbolic capital (autonomous or small scale cultural producers). Indeed, in this article I am concerned with how these differences play out among globally-oriented cultural intermediaries, and the way they shape the legitimation of foreign cultural products.³

The research uses music magazines as primary data and historical sources as secondary data (e.g. Italy's cultural and social histories; critics' public biographies). The following discussion draws on the analysis of 192 editorials, 297 music features, and 487 replies to readers' letters, whose samples are purposive and theory-driven. Editorials and replies to readers' letters were inductively analyzed via discourse analysis to reconstruct magazines' "position-takings" (Bourdieu, 1996), i.e. the ways in which they defined (and justified) their editorial line.⁴ Similarly, music features were inductively analyzed to reconstruct critics' evaluation of different acts and genres. This allowed a qualitative analysis of how critics evaluated new acts vis-à-vis an emergent canon of shared musical references. It also allowed analytical adherence to critics' own understandings of genre labels and their internal differences.

Following Bourdieu, I conceptualize critics' writing as a practice (Bourdieu, 1990) through which they mobilize their resources, drawing boundaries vis-à-vis their competitors and other actors - a field's "space of possibles" (Bourdieu, 1996: 193-205).

The following section discusses critics' aesthetic cosmopolitanism and its socio-historical genesis. I then turn to how this resource was mobilized by competing music magazines. All excerpts have been translated by me.

Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism as a Shared Resource

The rise of pop music criticism was enhanced by several social and institutional transformations, like young people's growing access to secondary and higher education during the post-war years (Cavalli & Leccardi, 1997) and the increasing internationalization of the recording industry from the late 1950s (De Luigi, 1982). Since I discuss these transformations elsewhere (Varriale, 2014, 2015a), here I focus on how they enabled the emergence of a shared cosmopolitan disposition among Italian critics.

Italian critics were young people born mostly between the mid-1940s and mid-1950s, with high educational attainments and an upper or middle class background (Varriale, 2015b). Educational qualifications provided them with a cultural capital that was "institutionalized" in high school diplomas and university degrees, but also "embodied" as a mastery of highbrow categories, like originality, innovation and artistic autonomy (Bourdieu, 1986). This embodied cultural capital was mobilized to appropriate the Anglo-American music trends imported by the Italian recording industry since the late 1950s. Indeed, the discovery of styles like rock 'n' roll, British beat, folk-rock and progressive-rock (De Luigi, 1982) provided critics with a foreign musical education, i.e. familiarity with the sounds, images and narratives of 1950s and 1960s pop-rock. The importance of this new symbolic resource clearly emerges in critics' position-takings. The first editorial of the monthly *Muzak* reveals the importance of an emerging pop-rock canon for the magazine's institutional identity and positioning within the growing sub-field of music criticism.

Three, four, five or perhaps ten years ago (who remembers Elvis?) anyone could find a momentary satisfaction in music. It could be marijuana, it could be another rum "n" cola, it could be a partner to love [...] or the politics expressed by the simple, Guthrie-like sound of Bob Dylan and the early Joan Baez. It could be Pink Floyd's rationality

or the craziness of Zappa (always to be praised); or the sonic and vocal evolutions of the unforgettable Jimi [Hendrix]. It could be, why not?, The Beatles, even the disgustingly *muzak* of Michelle [Beatles' song], and the Rolling [Stones], a landmark for so many deaf and sad ears. [...] Muzak is ugly music [*musicaccia*]. Well, ugly music is what we're interested in, perhaps to turn it into proper music (Editorial Board, 1973: 2).

The artistic value of this “muzak” was far from being recognized by other cultural institutions, like the education system and quality newspapers (Santoro, 2010). However, its field-specific value among critics and their readers had become established by 1974, when five specialist music magazines were already active in Italy (Varriale, 2014). An early editorial from the monthly *Gong* similarly evokes a collective social biography informed by the discovery of Anglo-American pop-rock. However, recognition of this new cultural tradition also implied a symbolic break with national forms of popular culture, particularly Italian light music (*musica leggera*).

Once upon a time there was Sanremo... A world of flowers, paillettes and light songs [*canzonette*] that had words rhyming with “heart”. The press covering this kind of events was all about the lives of celebrities [*spiccioli di cronaca mondana*]. However, the 1960s saw the beat explosion, that strange “thing” coming from England... People in their twenties stopped yawning. During those years, some kids of good will and a few adventurous magazines acted as improvised chroniclers for a youth hungry for new sounds. They provided some information and a lot of cheap myths. But the times have changed and the myths have been put back to their right perspective. A new musical culture has emerged and the interests of the youth have become more thoughtful. These are the needs which give birth to *Gong*. (Antonucci Ferrara, 1975)

Italian critics rejected Italian “light songs” and the institutional world supporting them, which included the *Sanremo Festival*⁵ and the Italian tabloids covering it. Similarly, a more “thoughtful” (that is, expert) approach to the evaluation of pop-rock implied a break with teen magazines, i.e. “adventurous magazines” which acted as “improvised chroniclers” during the 1960s (Tomatis, 2014). By the mid-1970s, critics’ aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Regev, 2013) had thus become a shared resource. It was a cosmopolitan capital (Weenink, 2008) which allowed membership into a new field of expertise and the making of symbolic boundaries between specialist and generalist publications, nationally and globally-oriented cultural institutions. To be sure, while critics recognized an emerging pop-rock canon, the value of contemporary acts was subject of ongoing debate. Critics’ cosmopolitan capital had indeed a pragmatic function: it was used as a yardstick of evaluation to discuss changing musical trends. As showed by the following example from the weekly *Ciao 2001*, critics’ music features compared contemporary acts with the recent past of Anglo-American pop-rock.

Musically and existentially, Lou Reed is reaching such an extreme position that you either accept all his contradictions or reject him without appeal. [...] After Brian Jones and Jim Morrison he’s the only one embodying rock’s absolute existentialism, its aspiration to disintegration and death, [and] that sense of provocation [...] which in the arts and culture has always raised scandal and debate (think about [...] Rimbaud, Jean Genet, or Pasolini). (Insolera, 1976: 16)

References to the achievements of 1960s acts like Doors (Jim Morrison) and Rolling Stones (Brian Jones), but also the Beatles and Bob Dylan (see below), were mobilized

to assess musicians' overall aesthetic projects. Critics used this resource along with their mastery of highbrow categories and knowledge of other, more consecrated artistic fields (like the French and Italian literary fields mentioned in the last excerpt). However, a more thorough analysis of critics' position-takings reveal that they mobilized their knowledge of the pop-rock past to implement competing "cosmopolitan projects". These implied different views of cultural globalization's opportunities and perils, and different strategies artistic legitimation; i.e. different ways of drawing boundaries between valuable and unworthy forms of contemporary popular music. The next section discusses the differences between the magazines *Ciao 2001*, *Muzak* and *Gong*.

Competing Cosmopolitan Projects

Economic Cosmopolitanism, Loose Boundaries: Ciao 2001

Ciao 2001 was the first specialist publication devoted to the coverage of pop-rock acts in Italy. It was launched in 1969 and, between the early 1970s and early 1980s, became the most successful publication in the field, selling between 60.000 and 80.000 copies per week (Rusconi, 1976). Like other specialist magazines, this weekly was committed to promoting "good" popular music and musicians' autonomy from commercial demands. As showed by the following position-taking, this highbrow orientation implied also evaluations of Italy's artistic standing within the transnational field of pop-rock.

People still listen to new albums because there is a lot of good music coming from abroad. Should we count on our "local" production, there would be cobwebs on record players and radios would remain turned off. Why is it that difficult to find out good

Italian artists? Why industry executives keep planning albums in their carpeted studios? They should go to the record stores sometimes, where young people buy actual records. I am sure they'd get some helpful insights (Rotondi, 1975: 11).

This excerpt draws boundaries between Italian musical production and the “good music coming from abroad”, criticising the recording industry for the low artistic quality of Italian popular music. It thus shows elements of aesthetic cosmopolitanism (Regev, 2013). However, the analysis of other position-takings reveal a more complex combination of aesthetic and *economic* cosmopolitanism, one that reflects the magazine's economic power, or heteronomous position (Bourdieu, 1996), in the field of pop music criticism. *Ciao 2001* frequently combined artistic appraisal of Anglo-American pop-rock with appraisal of its business models and promotional practices. If the Italian recording industry was blamed for not recognising true artistic talent, North-American and North-European labels were magnified for their efficiency and effective commercial practices.⁶

Abroad, the recording industry is an industry in the true sense of the word. It is an immense source of revenues, it moves millions of dollars and is a business writ large. [...] [F]or each album sold in Italy, ten albums are sold in other countries like England, Germany, the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, not to mention an obvious example like the United States of America. [...] It is precisely to sustain this thriving industry (also in its crises) that the price of albums is decided via rational and carefully planned marketing techniques (Giulietti, 1976: 36).

Rather than rejecting commercial demands in toto, *Ciao 2001* advocated effective market structures and “marketing techniques” as prerequisites of a “thriving” music

culture. In this respect, the weekly received with concern the growing politicization of Italian musical life. Political actors⁷ are an important part of the space of possibles (Bourdieu, 1996) in which music critics operated. During the 1970s, the Communist Party organized musical events on a regular basis (Gundle, 1995), and the New Left (*Nuova Sinistra*) and counter-cultural groups (like *Stampa Alternativa*) were active in the organization of alternative festivals (Prato, 2010). Moreover, the latter frequently organized collective protests against concerts with paid admission. In the following position-taking, *Ciao 2001* criticizes these actions against professional concerts. The excerpt further elucidates the weekly's economic cosmopolitanism.

Italians have learnt nothing from the experience of Anglo-Saxon countries. What we have is provincialism, laziness and insufficient musical preparation, *along with outdated labels and business models*. [...] There are some people ready to exert violence in order to sustain the idea of “free music”. It is a beautiful ideal, which is also in line with some of the messages conveyed by youth music. However, it is incompatible with the organization of concerts as it exists in Italy and abroad (with the difference that only here there are people protesting). (Anonymous, 1974: 16; emphasis added)

The counter-cultural ideal of “free music” implied the rejection of any market mediation between music producers and consumers. However, this position was unacceptable for a magazine which was benefiting precisely from the recording industry's commercial expansion in Italy, and from the growing audience for popular music albums.⁸ As a consequence, the magazine promoted a rather benign view of cultural globalization and its socio-structural effects. They were framed in terms of economic modernization, one resisted by both “provincial” industry executives and

counter-cultural movements.

The heteronomous orientation of *Ciao 2001* also influenced its strategies of artistic legitimation. As discussed elsewhere (Varriale, 2015a), the magazine promoted “loose” symbolic boundaries. It gave space to music styles, like hard rock, soul, disco music and teenybopper pop, whose artistic value was considered questionable by some of its readers and other magazines (see below). As showed by the following position-taking - a reply to a reader’s letter - this inclusive strategy of coverage raised allegations of commercialism, which required public justification and defence of the magazine’s ties with the pop-rock tradition.

Our aim has never been to impose a certain music style, but to report on avant-garde music, [like] pop, rock, jazz... Since there are new music trends today, it is unfair to say that we have changed. And we can’t be accused of being commercial either, as this phenomena [disco music] is everywhere and we are just a magazine, not a music label. I agree that the past is important, and we keep discussing it with the usual passion. But we also have to live in the present, perhaps to criticize or refuse it. (Rotondi, 1977a: 5-6)

The weekly mobilized its cosmopolitan capital in a distinctive way. While recognising that “the past is important”, it did not exclude problematic genres (like disco music) from the coverage, but advocated a “critical” stance towards them: they could be criticized and met with occasional negative reviews, but not ignored. This allowed inclusion of trends which were obtaining commercial success in Italy (Sfardini, 2001), but without breaking with the *doxa* of popular music criticism, that is, its implicit rules or presuppositions (Bourdieu, 1996). Indeed, membership into this field required commitment to critical, highbrow evaluation of Anglo-American

popular music.

We always try to address every new phenomenon of the international music scene (but of course it needs to have a minimum of artistic dignity to be considered). (Rotondi, 1977b: 5-6)

Ciao 2001 was certainly more inclusive than the monthlies *Muzak* and *Gong* (which I discuss below), but its inclusiveness had limitations. The weekly was still presented as a publication committed to “artistic dignity” and serious criticism. Indeed music styles which were at odds with the field’s *doxa*, such as Italian light music, were rarely included in the weekly’s coverage. Nonetheless, a wide variety of international acts could be framed as a logical (and welcomed) evolution of the pop-rock canon; even highly popular acts like Elton John.⁹

[Elton John] is the forth big rock phenomenon after Presley, the Beatles, and Bob Dylan. [...] [W]hile they enhanced a wider social and generational change, Elton John is a consequence of that change. [...] The pop revolution has become a stable system. However, there are positive aspects in this phenomenon. Elton John is endowed with creative intelligence and vivacity, he has been able to turn his infantile image into a truly “popular art”. (Insolera, 1975: 12)

This broadly international outlook helped the magazine maintain its position of economic leadership within a changing pop-rock field. As I show in the next section, the idea that the “pop revolution” had become a “stable system” was much more problematic for the monthlies. Their view of contemporary pop-rock, and the way they mobilized their cosmopolitan capital, reflect a different institutional orientation.

Political Cosmopolitanism, Normative Boundaries: Muzak and Gong

The monthly *Muzak* was launched in October 1973 by a group of young music enthusiasts based in Rome and Milan. By October 1974, the Milan-based group abandoned the project and established a new publication, *Gong*. This organizational break was fuelled by enduring disagreements about the musical acts worthy of critical attention (Bolelli, 1979). Nonetheless, these magazines developed a similar cultural politics and cosmopolitan project. They had lower selling figures than *Ciao 2001*: about 35.000 (*Muzak*) and 15.000 copies per month (*Gong*) (Rusconi, 1976; Bolelli, 1979). However, because of their aesthetic and political choices, they gained higher symbolic capital than the weekly, becoming recognized as less commercially-oriented and more serious publications (Carrera, 1980; Prato, 1995).

In contrast to *Ciao 2001*, the monthlies did not consider North-American and North-European recording industries as standards of economic modernization, as their distinctively *political* cosmopolitanism implied a different view of cultural globalization and its effects. As exemplified by the following excerpt (from *Muzak*), the monthlies argued that the American and English counter-cultures of the 1960s had failed to turn their aesthetic innovations into a truly alternative, anti-capitalist organization of culture.

Pop music is undoubtedly finding hard to renew itself. But it also finds hard being a “music in movement”, like ten years ago. So it is dead more politically than stylistically. Or at least it’s agonising. (Pintor, 1975: 15)

In comparison with “ten years ago”, the decline of contemporary pop-rock was both aesthetic and political. However, the Italian context could be a potential exception to this situation. If *Ciao 2001* saw the politicization of the Italian youth as a danger to the professional development of the pop-rock field, *Gong* and *Muzak* saw it as an opportunity. As showed by the following position-taking (from *Gong*), the monthlies received the growing protest of live concerts as evidence of a changing youth culture.

From 1974 onwards, few foreign names have attempted the world’s most difficult stadiums: the Italian ones. We have had few and far-from-exciting gigs (Zappa, Genesis, Soft Machine) and a disaster without precedent (Lou Reed) [...]. Those who believed that big American-style events could work here were wrong. These people [concert organizers] had bet on the ingenuity and enthusiasm of the youth. However, they had to deal with under-developed structures, but also with the growing politicization [of the youth] and opposition to both their methods and prices (Delconte & Masotti, 1975: 9).

In this context of renewed activism, and with Anglo-American acts avoiding Italy because of concerts’ political contestation (Fabbri, 2007), the monthlies believed it was possible to develop an alternative network of musical events. More importantly, they became invested in promoting new musical trends. Like *Ciao 2001*, the monthlies drew boundaries between valuable and unworthy music acts according to a highbrow perspective and vis-à-vis the recent past of Anglo-American pop-rock. Moreover, it was in reference to this past that they justified their institutional choices. However, if the weekly mobilized this collective, field-specific resource to consider “every new phenomenon of the international music scene” (Rotondi, 1977b), the monthlies almost ignored commercial trends like disco music and hard rock. In

comparison to the Beatles and Bob Dylan, contemporary trends like “decadent rock” (i.e. glam rock) were seen as a proof of pop-rock’s aesthetic decline.

Ian Hunter [Mott the Hoople’s singer] acts like a consummate performer, he looks like a decadent Bob Dylan and maybe has even something to tell, albeit it doesn’t impress us. [...] Like many other bands of the last years, Hunter and colleagues try to light up a Beatles-like excitement in the hearts of our little brothers. (Moroni, 1975: 40).

The monthlies focused on music trends which, in their view, were gaining the aesthetic and political centrality that pop-rock had ten years before. From 1976, *Muzak* looked at avant-garde jazz, the Italian folk revival, and even classical music as the future of youth music. As anticipated above, this choice was reinforced by the perception of a changing space of possibles. While Anglo-American acts were avoiding Italy, local jazz and classical music festivals, like *Umbria Jazz*, were obtaining considerable success among young people (Prato, 2010). *Muzak*’s critics believed that these trends were replacing pop-rock music.

How many people would indicate pop [music] as the driving force of the (so-called) youth culture today? [...] It’s not possible to identify with a music which has exhausted its historical relevance and revealed unsolvable contradictions and ambiguities. [...]

The mass enthusiasm for Arche [sic] Shepp or Nuova Compagnia di Canto Popolare [Italian folk revival band] is something completely new in Italy, and it proves that the false and watered-down mythologies of pop music have (hopefully) been defeated. [...]

The same is true for classical music [*musica colta*]. After decades of disinterest, many young people feel, somehow, the need to take back this music for themselves.

(Castaldo, 1976: 27)

While ignoring contemporary pop-rock, *Muzak* started publishing regular features on jazz (*Storia del Jazz*), the Italian folk revival (*Voce 'e Lotte*) and avant-garde singer-songwriters (e.g. Lucio Dalla). It also gave more space to political features (e.g. national elections, youth unemployment, the feminist movement). Similarly, *Gong* started promoting avant-garde jazz as the “new” youth music (albeit without sharing *Muzak*’s enthusiasm for the folk revival and singer-songwriters). The magazine became interested predominantly in what its critics called the “black avant-garde”, i.e. African American musicians like Antony Braxton, Cecil Taylor and the Art Ensemble of Chicago.

The collective and equitable way in which these musicians work [...] is alien to any cliché. While working on a common [aesthetic] objective, they are able to expand their creativity. As such [...] they represent the most accomplished way of interpreting, living and translating the fundamental tensions of reality as a whole. (Bolelli, 1975: 45)

According to *Gong*’s critics, this music was the product of real political tensions (e.g. the struggle of African-American musicians against racism and exclusion). Further, being aesthetically challenging, it could influence people’s consciousness. Its radical aesthetic was thus intrinsically political. A similar view of jazz’s aesthetico-political value was supported by *Muzak*.

Jazz is being rediscovered [...] because it demands a more intelligent form of participation. As with everything that demands intellectual effort (rather than just the guts), it develops understanding of the world and hence real communication. (Pintor, 1975: 16)

Meanwhile, the monthlies developed a nostalgic narrative about 1960s pop-rock. In comparison to this landmark of aesthetic and political innovation, contemporary pop-rock was seen as “a reassuring musical signature”.

It is difficult to believe that today someone could fall in love with the Californian sound. Without the society that nourished it, the legendary style is nowadays a pale ghost. It is just a “genre” among others [...] a reassuring musical signature. This would have been unthinkable during the days of White Rabbit [Jefferson Airplane’s song] and Grace Slick’s scandalous tongue. (Bertoncelli, 1976: 8)

Overall, the monthlies’ political cosmopolitanism implied both an anti-capitalist approach to cultural production, and a view of aesthetically challenging music as intrinsically political. If symbolic boundaries were loose in *Ciao 2001* (i.e. the weekly asked for a “minimum of artistic decency”), they were much more normative in *Muzak* and *Gong*, whose aesthetic and political standards were met by fewer acts and genres.

These editorial strategies had very different consequences. *Ciao 2001*’s inclusivity secured its economic leadership until the early 1980s (Gaspari, 1981), with the magazine surviving (with decreasing fortune) until 1994. The weekly, then, effectively “converted” its aesthetic cosmopolitanism into economic capital (Bourdieu, 1996). The monthlies’ more normative choices secured a higher degree of symbolic recognition (Carrera, 1980: 208; Prato, 1995), but made them short-lived projects. *Gong*’s editorial board abandoned the project by the end of 1977 for its increasingly low selling figures (Bolelli, 1979). In June 1976, *Muzak* was charged with “moral offence” by the Italian magistrature for publishing a report about

teenagers' sexuality. During the following months, the magazine's publisher (*Publisuono*) interrupted its financial support, and the editorial board was unable to find new funders (Rusconi, 1976). More importantly, the space of possibles which had fostered the monthlies' aesthetico-political choices was changing. Young people's interest in jazz and classical music proved being a temporary conjuncture (Fabbri 2007), and from 1978 the influence of politics on Italian musical life started decreasing (Prato, 2010). Newly launched music magazines, like *Il Mucchio Selvaggio* (1977) and *Rockerilla* (1978), reclaimed music's autonomy from politics and a stronger rock identity (Prato, 1995). The monthlies' break with contemporary pop-rock had thus proven premature.

Conclusion: Struggling over Cosmopolitan Capital

This article has explored how the introduction (and early consecration) of Anglo-American pop-rock in Italy redefined struggles for legitimacy in the musical field. I have argued that knowledge of 1950s and 1960s pop-rock acted as a shared cultural tradition for Italian critics. It was a field-specific capital which allowed membership into a new field of expertise and evaluation of changing musical trends. However, this shared resource was mobilized to implement competing cosmopolitan projects, which implied different views of cultural globalization and supported different boundary-drawing practices vis-à-vis contemporary popular music. Whereas *Ciao 2001* supported loose boundaries and adopted an inclusive definition of avant-garde and international pop-rock, the monthlies invested on music trends which they perceived as both aesthetically and politically challenging, thus defining more normative boundaries and a highly negative view of contemporary (1970s) pop-rock. Knowledge

of the pop-rock canon, thus, informed different editorial choices, which were shaped by the magazines' institutional orientations and resources; i.e. their position (Bourdieu, 1996) in the sub-field of music criticism.

Overall, the article expands research on cultural consecration exploring how transnational influences may shape local dynamics of legitimation, and how foreign, recently consecrated cultural traditions may be mobilized by different groups of cultural intermediaries. Adopting a field perspective (Varriale, 2014), the article has focused on how cultural organizations mobilize their resources, and define their institutional identities, vis-à-vis a space of possibles that includes other social and cultural institutions. In line with Bourdieu (1996), this approach supports a focus on dynamics of diversification and competition, which have been underappreciated in cultural consecration studies. My findings are of course limited to a specific socio-historical context. However, this is a valuable approach to study other processes of cultural legitimation and projects of retrospective consecration, as they are likely to be shaped by similar social forces.

The article also contributes to research on aesthetic cosmopolitanism in two ways: exploring its emergence in a periphery of the pop-rock field, and via further theoretical development. I have highlighted the distinction between aesthetic cosmopolitanism as a shared symbolic resource, and the ways in which this resource is put into practice (Bourdieu, 1990) and converted into other forms of capital. This perspective allows exploring the diversification of globally-oriented cultural organizations and their struggles over competing aesthetic canons. Similarly, a focus on how cosmopolitan preferences are mobilized, and the social fields in which they are valued, may prove useful in research on cultural consumption, which has characterized cosmopolitan taste as a homogeneous disposition among (younger)

upper-middle class respondents (Prieur & Savage, 2013). Future research could also explore the conditions under which aesthetic cosmopolitanism - a field-specific capital in my case study - becomes a cultural capital recognized by different social groups and institutions (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Indeed, we know relatively little about the extent to which foreign cultural forms are consecrated by more established (national) cultural institutions, like quality newspapers, the education system, and the state.

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Notes

1. Drawing on Regev (2013) and Kuipers (2012), I define aesthetic cosmopolitanism (or cosmopolitan taste) as selective knowledge of foreign cultural forms, one that can be used as “capital” in a different national context; especially one that is structurally peripheral in a transnational cultural field.

2. The local pop-rock field included cultural producers with a similarly “cosmopolitan” musical background, like Italian pop-rock musicians (Facchinotti, 2001) and singer-songwriters (Santoro, 2010).
3. To be sure, large and small scale cultural production are not universal invariants, but relational properties depending on context (Varriale, 2015a). How small or large are cultural organizations, how they mobilize their resources, and what political and ethical values underpin their cultural politics will vary across field, national and historical context. Similar variations will affect what cultural knowledge they consider valuable and what institutions they compete with. This is why differences in economic and symbolic capital were charged with political meanings in 1970s Italy (see below); because political actors were active in the musical field as much as critics (see also Varriale, forthcoming).
4. Position-takings are the discursive, subjective manifestation of field actors, whereas the concept of *position* indicates their “objective” properties (their historical trajectory and the kinds and amounts of capitals they possess). My research considers both positions and position-takings, but for analytical purposes and reasons of space this article focuses on the latter.
5. The *Sanremo Festival* is a national musical competition, annually broadcast by the public television (RAI) since 1955. It was (and still is) one of the most popular media events in Italy, particularly during the 1960s and, to a lesser extent, the 1970s (Facchinotti, 2001).
6. This view of North-European countries as more modern, however, did not translate into a comprehensive coverage of their musical production. At least between 1973 and 1977, all three magazines focused on American, British and Italian acts. Germany and France also received some attention (especially “krautrock” and folk

rock, respectively), but significantly less than the US and UK; and features on other European and non-European countries were very rare. As I discuss below, more avant-garde magazines like *Muzak* and *Gong* did not invest on more “exotic” musical traditions (Sapiro, 2010; Frassen and Kuipers, 2013), but on different Anglo-American genres like free jazz. However, exoticism figures very prominently in how they discussed Afro-American musicians (Varriale, 2015b).

7. See Ginsborg (1990) for a broader discussion of political activism in 1970s Italy and its influence over various social fields. In Varriale (forthcoming) I provide a more thorough analysis of how politics influenced the work of critics.

8. Between 1969 and 1979, albums’ selling figures rose from 4 to 20 millions per year (De Luigi, 1982: 53).

9. I wish to thank one of the reviewers for suggesting that more inclusive and commercially-oriented magazines were active also in Britain (*Record Mirror*) and the US (*Hit Parader*, *Tiger Beat*). Indeed differences between Italian magazines were likely to mirror differences which had been established in the centres of the pop-rock field. However, only a proper field analysis can reveal how these magazines positioned themselves (e.g. as serious or teen publications) and how they were received by other field actors (especially more “serious” publications like *Rolling Stone* or *NME*).

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